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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 001351

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PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

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TAGS: [CD](#) [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [SU](#)  
SUBJECT: NEW FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO CHAD ON POLITICAL  
DIALOGUE AND REBEL STRENGTH

Classified By: DCM LUCY TAMLYN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: The new French Ambassador to Chad acknowledged that France's special relationship with Chad made it difficult to push for the kind of political overtures which were needed to strengthen Chad's democratic institutions; he looked to the EU troika to assist in carrying the message. In his view, President Deby did not want an international force in Chad to be a platform for a UN force in Sudan, but did not appear against such a force in principle and wanted to be consulted about its role. Foucher also reported that a massing of three rebel columns was taking place along the Chad/Sudan border. End Summary.

#### VISITS FROM PARIS

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¶2. (C) The new French Ambassador to Chad, Bruno Foucher, paid a call on the Ambassador November 24. Ambassador Foucher touched on visits which he had already hosted and which he expected in the next week. Commanding the most attention would be the November 30 visit of French Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin. De Villepin, according to Ambassador Foucher, would make a three-hour "friendship stop" in N'djamena with enough time for lunch with President Deby and a tour of the French base before continuing on to Johannesburg. Foucher noted that de Villepin and President Deby were old acquaintances but that this would be de Villepin's first visit to Chad as Prime Minister. He said that there was no special message that de Villepin would bring on the visit. A few days earlier, Ambassador Foucher had hosted the visit of the French Minister of Defense. During the Minister's meeting with President Deby, the situation on Chad's eastern border, the situation in Central African Republic (CAR), the recent Tripoli Summit and a Chadian request for French equipment were discussed; the visit was not, however, intended to convey any particular message, according to Ambassador Foucher.

#### DEBY CONCERNED BY LACK OF CONSULTATIONS ON BORDER FORCE

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¶3. (C) Ambassador Foucher reported that President Deby had many questions concerning a possible international force on Chad's eastern border. Foucher explained that Deby was comfortable with a UN force in Darfur, but he hadn't understood France's recent call for a force in Chad, and was unhappy that he was not being consulted on this issue. Deby furthermore made clear that he did not want such a force to be a launching pad for a UN force in Darfur. Ambassador Foucher commented that the force in question was a realization of provisions of UN Security Resolution 1706, not any recommendation for a new body. Foucher reiterated that the President did not appear to be against a force in principle, but needed to be consulted.

14. (C) Ambassador Foucher responded positively to the Ambassador's query as to whether France would be interested in joining with the U.S. and the EU in a common approach to President Deby concerning an international force on the border. He agreed with the Ambassador that the mandate still needed to be determined, and the recommendation of the upcoming UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) visit would set the stage for further clarification on this point. The Ambassador recalled that a key concern of UNSCR 1706, para 9(d) was protecting the humanitarian space around the refugee camps. A force to protect the refugees and the humanitarian workers, and access to the camps was straightforward. Whether such a force would have a mandate to "dissuade" Janjaweed attackers in the Dar Silla region would certainly require a more robust presence. Ambassador Foucher agreed that in that case a new resolution might be needed (which, in an event, might be in the offing as a result of the Adis Ababa agreement.)

#### CHAD REBELS ON THE MOVE

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15. (C) Turning to Chad's political situation, Ambassador Foucher stated that rebels belonging to UFDD head Mahamat Nouri were apparently moving to the Chad border in three columns with anywhere from 250 to 400 vehicles. Surveillance planes had been flown from France's Epervier base last night but they had not been able to see anything. Foucher said that the Chad Minister of Defense believed that Nouri was moving forward in order to undermine the Tripoli accord between Sudan and Chad. According to Foucher, however, President Deby still believes that Nouri is taking orders from Sudan and that the Sudanese were simply demonstrating their duplicity. Ambassador Foucher reported that President

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Deby was very concerned about the situation in CAR. Northern CAR was virtually out of Bangui's control and this ungoverned area could be used by Sudan.

#### PRESIDENT DEBY'S POLITICAL FUTURE - A ROLE FOR EU PRESSURE

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16. (C) Responding to the Ambassador's question on President Deby's political future, Ambassador Foucher responded that there were no apparent alternatives. However, if Deby were to suddenly disappear from the scene, he feared inter-clan warfare in Chad. According to Foucher, France believed that President Deby needed to make political overtures -- "gestures" to Chad's political opposition. The EU wanted to see credible elections in 2007 with the opposition participating. For these reasons the EU was financing electoral assistance. France did not agree with the Chadian opposition that the armed opposition had a "right to speak" under the current circumstances. To do so would be to validate any Chadian who took up arms against the regime. Turning to the tools at hand to prod the Deby regime to make these gestures, Ambassador Foucher acknowledged that it was better for the EU Troika to be advocating them, inasmuch as France has a "special relationship" with Chad. A ministerial level visit by the Troika -- possibly headed by Commissioner Luis Michell -- might be possible before the end of the year to bring a message to the President.

#### TRIPOLI SUMMIT READ-OUT

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17. (C) Foucher called the Tripoli Summit yet another effort to reconcile Chad and Sudan and to implement the Tripoli Accords. This included reiterating the need to pull rebels 100 kilometers from the border and disarm them. According to Foucher, President Deby did not consider this feasible for Chad, given the dispersed nature of the Sudanese rebels; on the other hand, given that Sudan was manifestly arming and supporting Chadian rebels, Sudan could disarm them if it chose to do so. Ambassador Foucher appeared sympathetic to Deby's argument, and noted that he had asked French

intelligence services in Paris to identify any Chadian Government support for Sudanese rebels. Thus far they had not been able to provide this. President Deby is supposed to travel to Khartoum November 26 to discuss the proposal for mixed forces to patrol the border. In the meantime, two Chadian representatives have stayed behind in Tripoli to continue working with Libyan authorities on efforts to bring in Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) non-signatories, and two Sudanese counterparts would join them.

COMMENT

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18. (C) "End of an era" was not infrequently heard from French colleagues describing the departure of Ambassador Jean-Pierre Bercot. The new era appears to be one more interested in taking advantage of EU cover to push for strengthening of democratic institutions in Chad, recognizing the limitations that France's "special relationship" with Chad places on more aggressive bilateral pressure. Embassy has received corroborating reports on Chadian rebel movements and will report additional information as we receive it.

19. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.  
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